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JUDGE WILLIAM J. ROBERTSON.

MEMORIAL BY S. V. SOUTHALL.

At a memorial meeting of the bar of Albemarle county, Virginia, held in the honor of Judge Robertson's memory, on May 30, 1898, S. V. SOUTHALL, Esq., of the Charlottesville bar, in taking the chair, made the following remarks:

Friends and Brethren of the Bar: As you have been told by Judge White (when calling this meeting to order), we have assembled here to pay our last tribute of respect to Judge Robertson, whom we all admired and revered so much, but not more than he richly deserved. By tradition and membership I have known the Albemarle bar from the year of Judge Robertson's birth in 1817 down to the present time. From my father I have heard of the splendid achievements of the Barbours—James Barbour, senator, cabinet officer, minister; and his brother, Philip Barbour, who was for so many years a distinguished member of the Supreme Court of the United States. I know by tradition of John Howe Peyton, a man of gigantic mind, who was the attorney for the commonwealth of our circuit court when presided over by Judge Stuart, its first judge; and I have myself witnessed here the displays of the genius of Thomas J. Michie. It can be said of him, as Marshall said of Henry, he was an accurate thinker, a learned lawyer, and a profound reasoner. And I have admired and enjoyed here the astuteness, the ingenuity, the skill, and the learning of Egbert R. Watson. And I have likewise seen here the brilliant displays made by Shelton F. Leake, one of the most brilliant criminal lawyers I ever knew. I enjoyed his English pure and undefiled, and his flashing wit, keen as a Damascus blade. And last, but not least, I knew George Wythe Randolph, with his luminous mind, pure, lofty and gifted, worthy to be descended from Jefferson, and worthy to bear the honored name of Chancellor Wythe, the legal preceptor of his illustrious grandfather.

Of each and all of these Judge Robertson was the peer. I knew him long and knew him well—practised with him for forty years, and for ten years was his partner. And I can say, and not in any spirit of extravagance, but deliberately, that in my judgment he was the greatest lawyer I ever knew. I will say, and especially to the young

men of the bar, that the first thing that made him such a great lawyer was his tireless application and energy, and his unswerving fidelity in the service of his client. Then came the clearness and judicial structure of his mind. And then followed the originality, and strength, and volume, and creative power of his splendid intellect, enriched by a great wealth of legal knowledge.

Judge Robertson was an all-round lawyer—great in all the walks of the profession. His cases were prepared in a painstaking and thorough manner, and with great skill. He was a wise counsellor and an accomplished chancery lawyer. He was a powerful advocate before juries, and before courts of every grade. He was a great criminal defender, and greater than all as a criminal prosecutor, in which sphere of the profession he had few equals and no superior.

And how splendidly he bore himself as a lawyer—always moving on the highest plane!

He was charming as an associate, never arrogant or assuming, but rather deferential even to younger and inferior men; and in conference always frank, open and generous. He went into conference for the sake of his client, and not to appropriate the views of his associates and conceal his own. And as an adversary, though dangerous and dreadful, he was always fair, courteous and liberal. He had no use for the tricks of the profession except to denounce them. No lawyer ever practiced with Judge Robertson who was not struck with his great modesty. I never knew any lawyer of so much merit who had so much modesty. They were commensurate one with the other.

From 1859 to 1865 Judge Robertson added lustre to his reputation by his luminous opinions and eminent judicial ability as a member of the Court of Appeals of Virginia, especially distinguished at that time for its great judges, and presided over by Judge Allen, the peer of Pendleton, and Roane, and Carr, and Tucker.

And conspicuous as Judge Robertson was for his excellence as a lawyer and a judge, he was equally conspicuous for his purity and elevation as a man. His hand was bountiful and generous; his courage unflinching, but associated with a spirit just and gentle and kind; his integrity unbending; his truth unswerving—all combining to make him one of the most scrupulous and honorable men I ever had the privilege of knowing. And it was a privilege to know him, for no one ever knew him well who was not the better for having the acquaintance. In all the relations of life he stood high. There was no better father, no better husband, no kinder neighbor, and no truer friend.

As a citizen he despised and scorned the tortuous tricks and the dark and devious ways of the demagogue, and always moved forward with a manly tread along the pathway of patriotism, seeking to promote the welfare of his people and his country.

But I have said enough—perhaps as chairman too much—and if so, my intimacy with, and admiration of, Judge Robertson, must plead my excuse. But to sum it all up, I would say of Judge Robertson as Lord Stowell said of Lord Mansfield: “His was a great and illustrious name, which should never be mentioned except with accompanying words of praise.”

JUDGE WILLIAM J. ROBERTSON.*

May it Please Your Honors : I have been honored by a request to present to this honorable court the portrait of a distinguished jurist, whose professional career is familiar to us all, and whose memory we all revere.

It is not my purpose in complying with this request to pronounce a eulogy. That has already been done here and elsewhere, and done far better than I could hope to do, were I to attempt it. It is not inappropriate, however, to say that the name of William J. Robertson will ever be an honored and conspicuous one in the judicial annals of Virginia; for no man who has sat upon the bench of this court has combined in a larger degree the qualities of a great lawyer and a great judge. Very learned and very able judges undoubtedly have sat in this court, some of them great lawyers, but not one, save Judge Robertson, was at any time in their respective careers the pre-eminent, the universally-acknowledged leader of the bar of the State.

Already he had attained high rank in the profession when, at a comparatively early age, he was elected to fill a vacancy in this court. His term of service here was not long, only some five or six years, and of those years four were the period of the civil war, when the laws were practically silent. It is not surprising, therefore, to find, on looking into the reports, that he delivered opinions in not over a dozen cases. But his opinions, though not numerous, contain abundant evidence of his superior qualities as a judge. The very first opinion he

* Remarks of Hon. Lunsford L. Lewis on the occasion of the delivery of a portrait of Judge Robertson to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia.